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ABSTRACT

To improve vocational educational programs in agriculture, occupational information on a common core of basic skills within the occupational area of the retail landscape and garden store salesman is presented in the revised task inventory survey. The purpose of the occupational survey was to identify a common core of basic skills which are performed and are essential for success in the occupation. Objectives were accomplished by constructuring an initial task inventory to identify duty areas and task statements for the occupation. The initial task inventory was reviewed by consultants in the field and 147 tasks were identified. A random sample of 75 retail landscape and garden store centers was obtained. Data were collected utilizing employer and employee questionnaires. Thirty-four questionnaires were returned of which 29 were usable. A compilation of basic sample background information is presented on the size of a retail landscape and garden center, total work experience, employment at current job, and preparation as a retail landscape and garden store salesman. A compilation of duty areas of work performed and work essential for the occupation is given. Percentage performance by incumbent workers and the average levels of importance of specific task statements are presented in tabular form. (Author/EC)

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DETERMINATION OF A COMMON CORE OF BASIC SKILLS IN AGRIBUSINESS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

An Emperical Determination Of Tasks Essential To Successful Performance As A Retail Landscape And Garden Store Salesman

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210

CE005616

AN EMPERICAL DETERMINATION OF TASKS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE AS A RETAIL LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN STORE SALESMAN

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FOREWORD

The Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University is involved in a major programmatic effort to improve the curricula in education programs in agriculture. One product in this effort is this report of the retail landscape and garden store salesman task inventory survey. The data reported were collected as part of a more comprehensive thrust designed to develop a common core of basic skills in agribusiness and natural resources.

It is hoped that the revised task inventory contained in this report will be useful to curriculum developers working for improved occupational relevance in schools. Twenty-seven additional inventories in other occupational areas are also reported from this project.

The profession owes its thanks to Tom Edwards, graduate research associate, for his work in preparing this report. Special appreciation is also expressed to I.P. Olmsted, Jr., Executive-Secretary of The Ohio Nurserymen's Association, Inc., for his input and help in securing the cooperation of those employed in this occupational area.

J. David McCracken
Project Director

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INTRODUCTION

Occupational information is needed to develop and revise vocational and technical education curricula. Teachers and curriculum developers generally determine which skills might be taught in a program based upon teacher expertise, advisory committee input, informal and formal community surveys, and/or task inventories.

The Agricultural Education Department at The Ohio State University has utilized and revised a system for obtaining and using occupational information as an effective aid in planning, improving, and updating occupational education curricula. This report presents the results of a survey of the occupation, retail landscape and garden store salesman. The information contained herein may be used by curriculum development specialists, teachers, local and state administrators, and others involved in planning and conducting vocational and technical programs in agriculture.

Purpose and Objectives

The major purpose of the occupational survey was to identify the skills which are performed and essential for success as a retail landscape and garden store salesman. The specific objectives of this survey were as follows:

1. Develop and validate an initial task inventory for the retail landscape and garden store salesman.

2. Identify the specific tasks performed by the retail landscape and garden store salesman.

3. Determine the relative importance of the specific tasks to successful employment as a retail landscape and garden store salesman.

Definition of the Occupational Area

The retail landscape and garden store salesman works in retail shops that sell directly to the public. The specific duties performed by the retail landscape and garden store salesman will vary with the type and size of business. The retail landscape and garden store salesman is primarily involved with selling materials to customers and caring for the merchandise. In general, the retail landscape and garden store salesman cares for plants and merchandise; arranges plants and supplies in displays; sells plants and merchandise to customers; stocks shelves; loads and unloads supplies and plants; recommends plants to customers; advises customers on establishing plants; and advises customers on disease and insect control procedures. In some firms the retail landscape and garden store salesman may be called a garden center employee or laborer.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives were accomplished by constructing an initial task inventory, validating the initial inventory, selecting a sample of workers, collecting data, and analyzing data.

Initial Task Inventory

Duty areas and task statements for the retail landscape and garden store salesman were identified by searching existing task lists, job descriptions, curriculum guides, and reference publications. Additionally, contacts with several industry personnel aided in clarifying the specific responsibilities of the retail landscape and garden store salesman. All the tasks

that the project staff thought to be performed were assembled into one composite list.

The initial tasks were grouped into functional areas called "Duties".

After the task statements were grouped under the proper duty areas, each task statement was reviewed for brevity, clarity, and consistency. In all, 183 task statements were included in the initial task inventory.

Initial Inventory Validation

After the initial task inventory was constructed, it was reviewed by six consultants employed in retail landscape and garden store firms. These consultants were either managers or salesmen.

The consultants were asked to respond to the initial task list inventory by performing the following activities:

1. Indicate whether any of the tasks listed were not appropriate.
2. Add any additional tasks they believed were performed by the retail landscape and garden store salesman.
3. Make changes in the wording of tasks to help add clarity to the statements.

The comments from the six consultants were pooled and needed revisions were made. Two duty areas were eliminated and three duty areas were combined. One new duty area was added.

As a result of the initial task inventory review process, 147 tasks were identified.

Worker Sample Selection

Since the specific duties and tasks performed by the individual retail landscape and garden store salesman are related to the size and type of business where employed, an attempt was made to survey retail landscape and garden store salesmen employed in various sizes and types of retail landscape and garden centers. It was not possible to secure a list of the specific names and addresses of all incumbent workers in the state. Therefore, a sample of 75 retail landscape and garden store centers was obtained from the 1975 yearbook of The Ohio

Nurserymen's Association, Inc. using a stratified random sampling approach. The strata used were size and type of business.

Data Collection

A packet of materials was sent to the owner or manager of the randomly selected retail landscape and garden centers. The packet of materials included:

1. A cover letter from Nurserymen's Association, Inc.
2. An employer questionnaire printed on blue.
3. An employee questionnaire printed on yellow.
4. A stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

The manager or owner was instructed to complete the employer questionnaire and to have a responsible retail landscape and garden store salesman complete the employee questionnaire. The manager or owner was instructed to collect the employee questionnaire and return both the employer and employee questionnaire in the stamped and self-addressed return envelope by the date specified in the cover letter.

A follow-up of non-respondents consisted of mailing a packet of materials two weeks after the initial mailing. The follow-up consisted of a packet of materials identical to the initial packet except that a cover letter on Ohio State University stationery replaced the cover letter on The Ohio Nurserymen's Association, Inc. stationery.

Data Analysis

The 34 questionnaires which were returned were checked for completeness and accuracy by the project staff. Information from the 29 usable responses was coded on Fortran coding sheets for key punching. In addition to coding appropriate respondent background information, each specific task statement was coded as to whether it was performed (1 = Task performed by respondent; blank = Task not performed by respondent) and the level of importance of the task (3 = Essential; 2 = Useful; 1 = Not Important). The information was keypunched on IBM cards and verified by personnel at the Instruction and Research Computer Center at The Ohio State University.

The data was analyzed using the SOUPAC computer program and the facilities of the Instruction and Research Computer Center.

Consultant assistance for analyzing the data was provided by personnel at The Center for Vocational Education. The SOUPAC computer analysis resulted in the computation of relative frequencies, means, and rankings for each task statement. The results of the computer analyses were printed in tabular form for ease of interpretation.

FINDINGS

Objectives of the study resulted in the compilation of basic sample background information, the determination of tasks performed by the retail landscap and garden store salesman, and the identification of tasks essential to successful performance as a retail landscape and garden store salesman.

Description of the Sample

Information regarding the performance of tasks and the importance of the tasks to successful employment as a retail landscape and garden store salesman was obtained from salesmen in various retail landscape and garden centers across Ohio.

Response to the Survey

A total of 75 questionnaires were mailed and 34 replies were received. This represented a 45.3% rate of return. The response to the questionnaire is summarized in TABLE I.

TABLE I

EMPLOYEE RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

	N	Percent of All Employees In the Survey
Employees in Survey	75	100.0
Total Returns	34	45.3
Usable Returns	29	38.7
Unusable Returns	5	6.6
Nonrespondents	41	54.7

Size of Retail Landscape and Garden Center

Retail landscape and garden store salesmen from various size retail landscape and garden centers were included in the study. The number of full-time equivalent (two one-half time salesmen equal one full-time equivalent) retail landscape and garden store salesmen was used as an index to assess the size of retail landscape and garden center where the salesman was employed. Of the 34 questionnaires received, 19 included information regarding the size of retail landscape and garden center. TABLE II summarizes the responses to the question, "How many full-time equivalent retail sales personnel are employed in your firm?" Ten salesmen or 52.6% were employed in firms employing one to six full-time equivalent salesmen. Four salesmen or 21.1% were employed in firms employing seven to ten full-time equivalent salesmen. Thus, 73.7% of the salesmen were working in firms employing one to ten full-time equivalent salesmen. The number of full-time equivalent salesmen employed in the firms ranged from 1-28. The average number of full-time equivalent salesmen employed in the firms was 9.2.

TABLE II

SIZE OF RETAIL LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN CENTER WHERE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

Number of Sales Personnel Employed in Firm	N	Percent of Respondents
1-3	4	21.1
4-6	6	31.5
7-10	4	21.1
11 or more	5	26.3
Total	19	100.0

$\bar{X}$ number of salesmen in the firm = 9.2

Total Work Experience

Retail landscape and garden store salesmen with varying amounts of work experience in the retail landscape and garden industry were included in the study. TABLE III summarizes the responses to the question, "How many total years have you worked

in a retail landscape and garden store?" Seventeen salesmen or 58.6% had from one to ten total years of work experience in the retail landscape and garden industry. Nine salesmen or 30.8% had from 11-26 total years of work experience in the retail landscape and garden store industry. The total years of work experience in the retail landscape and garden store industry ranged from 1-30 years. Salesmen had an average of 11.6 years of total work experience in the retail landscape and garden store industry.

TABLE III

TOTAL AMOUNT OF WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE RETAIL LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN STORE INDUSTRY

Years	N	Percent of Respondents
1-3	5	17.3
4-6	4	13.7
7-10	8	27.6
11-14	4	13.7
15-18	3	10.3
19-22	1	3.4
23-26	1	3.4
27 or more	3	10.3
Total	29	100.0

$\bar{X}$ years in the industry = 11.6

Employment at Current Job

Retail landscape and garden store salesmen in the survey had spent varying amounts of time in their present job. TABLE IV summarizes the responses to the question, "How many years have you worked at your present job?" Twenty salesmen or 69% had worked at their present job from one to ten years. Seven salesmen or 24.1% had worked at their present job from 11-26 years. The years of work at their present job ranged from 1-30 years. Salesmen had been employed at their present job an average of 9.9 years.

Preparation as a Retail Landscape and Garden Store Salesman

Retail landscape and garden store salesmen obtained training

for their job from various sources. TABLE V summarizes their responses to the question, "Where did you receive your training as a retail landscape and garden store salesman?" Twenty-seven salesman or 96.4% indicated they received training on-the-job. Twelve salesmen or 42.8% indicated they attended a college or university to receive training as a retail landscape and garden store salesman. Five salesmen or 17.8% indicated they had received training as a retail landscape and garden store salesman by attending a high school and/or technical school program.

TABLE IV

LENGTH OF TIME AT PRESENT JOB

Years	N	Percent of Respondents
1-3	8	27.6
4-6	7	24.1
7-10	5	17.3
11-18	5	17.3
19-22	1	3.4
23-26	1	3.4
27 or more	2	6.9
Total	29	100.0

$\bar{X}$ years at present job = 9.9

TABLE V

SOURCE OF TRAINING RECEIVED AS A RETAIL LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN STORE SALESMAN

Source	N	Percent of All Employees In the Survey
On-The-Job	27	96.4
High School Program	3	10.7
Technical School Program	2	7.1
College/University Program	12	42.8
Adult Education Program	1	3.5
O.S.U. Short Course	2	7.1
Military Training	1	3.5

Duty Areas of Work Performed by the Retail Landscape and Garden Store Salesman

The 147 tasks were grouped under 16 duty areas. Each respondent indicated whether he performed the specific task in his current position as a retail landscape and garden store salesman. The percentages of respondents performing each task were averaged for all tasks under each duty area. The mean percentage of incumbents who performed specific tasks in specified duty areas is presented in TABLE VI.

Duty areas of work in which 50% or more of the incumbent workers performed the tasks were:

1. Performing General Office Work
2. Recording Information
3. Inventorying Products
4. Selling and Marketing Nursery Stock and Other Products
5. Receiving Nursery Stock and Other Products
6. Operating Equipment and Vehicles
7. Designing Landscapes for Customers
8. Recommending Plants for Customers
9. Handling and Caring for Plants
10. Delivering Nursery Stock and Other Merchandise
11. Purchasing Merchandise and Plants for Resale
12. Advising Customers on Control of Plant Insects and Diseases
13. Advising Customers on Control of Weeds
14. Advising Customers on Establishing Plants

Duty Areas of Work Essential for Successful Performance as a Retail Landscape and Garden Store Salesman

A level of importance rating was obtained for each task. The respondent could rate the task as essential, useful, or not important for successful performance as a retail landscape and garden store salesman. A ranking of essential was assigned a numerical rating of "3", useful a numerical rating of "2", and not important a numerical rating of "1". The level of importance ratings for each task were averaged for all tasks under each duty area. The average level of importance ratings for the specific tasks in the specified duty areas are presented in TABLE VI.

Duty areas of work which received a 2.0 or higher level of importance rating by incumbent workers were:

1. Performing General Office Work
2. Recording Information
3. Inventorying Products

4. Selling and Marketing Nursery Stock and Other Products
5. Receiving Nursery Stock and Other Products
6. Operating Equipment and Vehicles
7. Designing Landscapes for Customers
8. Recommending Plants for Customers
9. Grading Nursery Stock
10. Delivering Nursery Stock and Other Merchandise
11. Purchasing Merchandise and Plants for Resale
12. Advising Customers on Control of Plant Insects and Diseases
13. Advising Customers on Control of Weeds
14. Advising Customers on Establishing Plants
15. Handling and Caring for Plants
16. Storing and Warehousing Nursery Stock and Merchandise

Percentage Performance and Level of Importance Ratings of Specific Tasks

The percentage performance by incumbent workers and the level of importance for each specific task is also presented in TABLE VI.

It is recommended that the results for each specific task be examined by educators and others who are developing educational programs to determine curriculum content for preparing retail landscape and garden store salesmen. Specific tasks with a high level of performance and a high level of importance rating should be given more emphasis in the educational program than specific tasks with a low level of performance and a low level of importance rating.

TABLE VI

PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE AND AVERAGE RATING OF IMPORTANCE* OF SPECIFIC TASKS

TASK STATEMENTS	Percent Performing	Average Level of Importance
Performing General Office Work		
File office forms and records	55	2.1
Schedule appointments	68	2.2
Use telephone	93	2.9
Write notes, memos, and letters	86	2.6
Use business forms	68	2.3
File technical information and publications	58	1.8
Mean Rating	71.3	2.3
Recording Information		
Record inventory information on record forms	72	2.4
Record sales information	75	2.6
Record price increase information for specific plants	75	2.6
Mean Rating	74.0	2.5
Inventorying Products		
Assist in taking inventory	86	2.6
Prepare inventory reports	55	2.1
Establish estimated ordering quantity (EOQ)	68	2.2
Establish reordering point (ROP)	55	1.9
Mean Rating	66.0	2.2
Selling and Marketing Nursery Stock and Other Products		
Complete sales slips	86	2.7
Conduct demonstrations with items for sale	58	1.9
Describe qualities and desirable selling features of items	93	2.8
Prepare sales displays	79	2.5
Interpret customers' descriptions of items	89	2.7
Describe general plant care instructions to customers	96	3.0
Label plants with price tags and instruction tags	82	2.6
Make change	75	2.2
Receive customers' orders by telephone	86	2.6
Stock shelves with merchandise	75	2.3

*Average rating of importance may range from 1-3 with 3 being the highest

TABLE VI (Cont.)

PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE AND AVERAGE RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC TASKS

TASK STATEMENTS	Percent Performing	Average Level of Importance
Interpret and use a customer credit plan	55	2.2
Use cash register	68	2.5
Write advertisements	62	1.9
Determine if merchandise requested is on hand	82	2.7
Handle customer objections and complaints	93	2.7
Sell substitute items to customers	89	2.5
Sell related items to customers	86	2.5
Calculate customer discounts on large orders	75	2.2
Identify seasonal items	76	2.4
Use sales catalogs	76	2.3
Evaluate customer needs	79	2.5
Make in-store sales contact	76	2.3
Make out-of-store sales contact	76	2.3
Participate in nursery sales training sessions	59	2.2
Follow up large sales orders	59	2.4
Close a sale	89	2.5
Conduct sales presentation	56	1.9
Wrap plants and merchandise	69	1.9
Explain contracts to customers	66	2.0
Identify items to be used in various displays	76	2.1
Design mock arrangements of nursery stock	43	1.8
Set sales quotas	33	1.9
Plan daily sales contact schedule	33	1.5
Estimate potential customer market	46	1.8
Summarize daily sales record	36	1.5
Recommend various products	76	2.6
Develop list of satisfied customers potential buyers may contact	43	1.8
Select appropriate method of advertising	43	2.0
Determine when to advertise	50	2.1
Determine costs of advertising	43	1.9
Mean h[illegible]	67.6	2.1
Receiving Nursery Stock and Other Products		
Check materials received against bill of lading or invoice	86	2.6
Check for damaged or dead plants	83	2.6
Mean Rating	84.5	2.6

TABLE VI (Cont.)

PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE AND AVERAGE RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC TASKS

TASK STATEMENTS	Percent Performing	Average Level of Importance
Storing and Warehousing Nursery Stock and Merchandise		
Control temperature and humidity in storage areas	36	1.9
Identify problems that might occur during storage	53	2.2
Use appropriate types of storage facilities	53	2.2
Mean Rating	47.3	2.1
Operating Equipment and Vehicles		
Interpret gauge readings on equipment	50	2.1
Operate vehicles on public highways	59	2.3
Interpret safety symbols on equipment	56	2.3
Mean Rating	55.0	2.2
Designing Landscapes for Customers		
Determine blooming stages of flowers and trees	76	2.4
Determine labor requirements for completing landscape job	53	2.4
Determine time of year to complete landscaping tasks	59	2.4
Evaluate growth pattern of various plants	73	2.5
Evaluate various climatic factors in using plants in the landscape	69	2.6
Evaluate various soils in area when locating plants in landscape	69	2.6
Evaluate use of grounds in planning landscape	63	2.6
Identify customers' preferences for plants	75	2.6
Identify plants and accessories to include in landscape	68	2.6
Interpret landscape specifications and designs prepared by landscape architects	51	2.4
Prepare cost estimate of landscape plan	55	2.5
Visually inspect present landscape	51	2.4
Mean Rating	63.5	2.5
Recommending Plants for Customers		
Classify plants as annuals, biennials, and perennials	79	2.4
Classify plants as full-sun, filtered-sun, or shade plants	89	2.8

TABLE VI (Cont.)

PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE AND AVERAGE RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC TASKS

TASK STATEMENTS	Percent Performing	Average Level of Importance
Identify arborvitae	93	2.8
Identify deciduous shade trees	93	2.8
Identify evergreens	96	2.9
Identify flowers	93	2.7
Identify fruit trees	89	2.7
Identify nut trees	65	2.0
Identify ornamental trees	89	2.6
Identify plant parts	62	2.2
Identify potted plants	79	2.6
Identify shrubs	93	2.8
Identify tree parts	62	2.1
Recommend deciduous shade trees	93	2.8
Recommend evergreen trees	93	2.8
Recommend flower plants or flower seeds	86	2.6
Recommend fruit trees	86	2.6
Recommend nut trees	65	2.1
Recommend ornamental trees	93	2.7
Recommend seeding mixtures	86	2.6
Recommend shrubs	89	2.7
Mean Rating	84.0	2.5
Grading Nursery Stock		
Follow grading standards of the USDA standards for nursery stock	48	2.1
Label plants after grading	48	2.1
Sort plants according to grade	37	2.0
Use measuring instruments to grade stock	37	2.0
Mean Rating	42.5	2.1
Delivering Nursery Stock and Other Merchandise		
Collect for C.O.D. orders	55	2.1
Complete delivery reports and logs	44	2.0
Describe post-shipping practices for plants	41	2.0
Determine location of delivery	62	2.3
Load delivery truck	62	2.0

TABLE VI (Cont.)

PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE AND AVERAGE RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC TASKS

TASK STATEMENTS	Percent Performing	Average Level of Importance
Select appropriate delivery route	58	2.2
Mean Rating	53.6	2.1
Purchasing Merchandise and Plants for Resale		
Determine amount to order	65	2.4
Determine what to order	65	2.4
Determine when to order	58	2.4
Mean Rating	62.6	2.4
Advising Customers on Control of Plant Insects and Diseases		
Evaluate influence diseases and insects have on plant growth	75	2.7
Evaluate life cycle of insects to determine control procedures	62	2.3
Identify common insects and pests	86	2.7
Identify damage and symptoms of common diseases	86	2.7
Suggest chemicals to control insects and diseases	86	2.9
Suggest cultural insect and disease control practices	72	2.5
Distinguish between harmful and beneficial insects	72	2.6
Recommend appropriate insect and disease specialists or publications to consult	75	2.5
Interpret chemical labels	68	2.6
Mean Rating	75.7	2.6
Advising Customers on Control of Weeds		
Evaluate influence weeds have on plant growth	75	2.5
Identify common weeds	82	2.7
Suggest chemicals to control weeds	72	2.8
Suggest cultural practices to control weeds	75	2.6
Interpret chemical labels	72	2.6
Mean Rating	75.2	2.6

TABLE VI (Cont.)

PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE AND AVERAGE RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC TASKS

TASK STATEMENTS	Percent Performing	Average Level of Importance
Advising Customers on Establishing Plants		
Advise on planting and care of plants	93	2.9
Advise on mowing of grasses	58	2.7
Advise on pruning plants	82	2.6
Advise on time to plant	82	2.8
Advise on watering plants	86	2.8
Evaluate factors that influence transpiration and respiration	48	2.0
Evaluate process of photosynthesis	37	1.7
Evaluate the influence various nutrients have on plant growth	62	2.2
Evaluate the various processes of propagation	41	1.8
Identify nutrient deficiency symptoms in plants	58	2.4
Identify problems related to establishment failures	58	2.3
Identify purpose of various nutrients needed by plants	62	2.1
Interpret information on seed tags	62	2.4
Interpret plant analysis reports	44	2.0
Recommend amount of fertilizer to apply	75	2.8
Recommend appropriate mulches	79	2.8
Recommend appropriate seeding mixtures	82	2.6
Recommend appropriate seeds	72	2.4
Recommend kind of fertilizer to apply	79	2.8
Recommend when fertilizer should be applied	79	2.8
Suggest appropriate methods for applying fertilizer	79	2.6
Mean Rating	67.5	2.4
Handling and Caring for Plants		
Assemble plants for shipping	48	1.9
Heel in plants	58	2.2
Help dig, ball, and burlap plants	55	2.1
Prepare plants to prevent wind and shipping damage	58	2.2
Water plants	79	2.6
Mean Rating	59.6	2.2